

EXDIS

Case Number: 200102877

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.5(C), 1.5(D)

PTQ3963

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ACTION SS-00

INFO LOG-00 SAS-00 /000W
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O 251928Z SEP 00
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6538
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE
USCINCSO MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

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USCINCSO PLEASE HANDLE AS SPECAT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/10
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, OAS, PE
SUBJECT: REFLECTIONS ON PERU'S 10-DAY CRISIS

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1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR JOHN R. HAMILTON, EMBASSY
LIMA, REASON: 1.5(D).

2. (S) SUMMARY: IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR HOW THE VIDEOTAPE THAT
SET OFF THE CRISIS LEAKED BUT

FUJIMORI'S DAUGHTER
KEIKO, FUJIMORI'S BROTHER SANTIAGO, LIMA ARCHBISHOP CIPRIANI
AND FIRST VICE PRESIDENT TUDELA DESERVE MUCH CREDIT FOR A
MONTHS-LONG EFFORT TO BRING FUJIMORI TO THE POINT WHERE HE
WAS READY TO MOVE AGAINST MONTESINOS. CONCERNS THAT
FUJIMORI MIGHT NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH SIMPLY TO FIRE
MONTESINOS WERE WELL-FOUNDED, AS HE WAS ABLE TO DISMISS HIM

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ONLY BY BRINGING DOWN THE ENTIRE EDIFICE OF HIS OWN GOVERNMENT AT THE SAME TIME. TENSIONS WITH THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND REACHED THEIR HIGHEST POINT IN RECENT YEARS, BUT WE ARE NOT SURE THE SITUATION (I.E, THREAT OF A COUP) WAS AS DIRE AS THE SENIOR OFFICIALS BELIEVED IT.

THE OUTCOME WITH RESPECT TO MONTESINOS IS MOSTLY POSITIVE. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, HIS GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTED EXILE LOOKS LIKE IMPUNITY AND THE ASSERTION OF CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY WAS ACHIEVED MORE BY FUJIMORI'S SAGACITY THAN BY THE MILITARY ACCEPTING THE PRESIDENT'S CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY. PROSPECTS FOR REAL PROGRESS ON THE ISSUES UNDER CONSIDERATION IN THE OAS DIALOGUE, HOWEVER, ARE VERY SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED. WE EXPECT THE DEMONSTRATION EFFECT ELSEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA OF THE ULTIMATE FAILURE OF THE FUJIMORI MODEL OF ELECTED AUTHORITARIANISM WILL BE SALUTORY. ALTHOUGH PERU NOW FACES THE RENEWED UNCERTAINTY OF A WIDE-OPEN ELECTION (THE DEARTH OF STRONG CANDIDATES HAVING NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC EFFECTS), THE

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MID-TO LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, STABILITY AND PERU'S IMAGE ABROAD ARE HUGELY POSITIVE. LASTLY, THE U.S. ACQUITTED ITSELF WELL IN THIS CRISIS AND, WHILE THERE WILL BE SOME POSTURING FROM THE OPPOSITION AND CARPING FROM CIVIL SOCIETY THAT MONTESINOS IS NOT FACING CHARGES, OUR CREDENTIALS AS DEFENDERS OF DEMOCRACY ARE STRENGTHENED. OUR STANDING WITH THE FUJIMORI GOVERNMENT IS LIKewise IMPROVED.
END SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

3. (S) THIS WAS A POLITICAL CRISIS THAT, EVOLVING QUICKLY, WAS NOT EASY TO STAY ON TOP OF, GIVEN THAT PUJIMORI'S PENCHANT FOR SECRECY IS MATCHED BY THE MILITARY'S. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE VIDEOTAPE THAT TRIGGERED IT WAS DRAMATIC. THE CRISIS MATURED QUICKLY, FUJIMORI MAKING HIS BOLD DECISION TO BRING DOWN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT ONLY 48 HOURS AFTER IT BEQAN. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE DYNAMICS OF THE CRISIS EVOLVED, TOO. WITH US, AND FOR SEVERAL DAYS, SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAINTAINED A STEADFAST FACADE OF EQUANIMITY VIS A VIS MILITARY INTENTIONS. THAT CHANGED ABRUPTLY SEPTEMBER 20. WE MAY YET CHANGE OUR ANALYSIS OF WHAT HAPPENED, BUT BELOW WE GIVE OUR TAKE ON THE KEY QUESTIONS.

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4. (S) HOW DID THE OPPOSITION GET THE TAPE?

WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WITH CERTAINTY. SOMEONE IN THE SIN ITSELF LEAKED IT, BUT WHO AND EXACTLY WHY ARE UNCLEAR.

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MOTIVES COULD INCLUDE MONEY, PERSONAL REVENGE ON MONTESINOS (E.G., FOR MOVING AGAINST THE AYBAR BROTHERS IN THE PARC ARMS TRAFFICKING SCANDAL?) OR POLITICAL ALTRUISM (TO IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM).

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5. (S) WHY DID THIS CONSTITUTE THE LAST STRAW FOR FUJIMORI?

ONE HEARS THIS DISCUSSED AROUND TOWN IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS: MONTESINOS ARGUABLY HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH MORE

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6539
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE
USCINCSO MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

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SERIOUS ABUSES THAN BUYING OFF A CONGRESSMAN. FUJIMORI HAS ALWAYS DEFENDED MONTESINOS BEFORE. WHY NOT NOW? WE BELIEVE THE ANSWER IS PARTLY THAT THE TAPE DEPICTED THE MOST VENAL OF BEHAVIOR SO VIVIDLY. ANOTHER IS THAT, IN RECENT MONTHS, THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO PUJIMORI -- HIS DAUGHTER KEIKO (PLUS FUJIMORI'S BROTHER SANTIAGO) AND LIMA ARCHBISHOP JUAN LUIS CIPRIANI -- HAVE BEEN STEADILY AND RELENTLESSLY ENCOURAGING HIM TO GET RID OF MONTESINOS. CIPRIANI PITCHED THE AMBASSADOR ON THE SUBJECT OF MONTESINOS LAST MARCH AND WENT PUBLIC WITH HIS OPPOSITION TO MONTESINOS IN THE HOMILY HE GAVE AT MASS THE MORNING OF PUJIMORI'S INAUGURATION DAY, JULY 28. FIRST VICE PRESIDENT TUDELA WAS AN INFLUENCE, TOO. HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK THAT, BEFORE HIS HIGHLY PUBLIC DISTANCING FROM THE FUJIMORI GOVERNMENT IN JULY, HE GAVE THE PRESIDENT A FIVE-PAGE SINGLE SPACED LETTER SETTING FORTH THE REASONS MONTESINOS HAD TO GO. TUDELA ALSO URGED THE INITIAL OAS TEAM THAT VISITED HERE POST-WINDSOR TO MAKE REMOVAL OF MONTESINOS A TOP PRIORITY. (MONTESINOS THEN WENT AFTER TUDELA, ACCORDING TO TUDELA, ENSURING THAT PUJIMORI DID NOT GIVE HIM A CABINET POSITION.) WE WERE AN INFLUENCE, TOO. PUJIMORI BEGAN TO HEAR FROM THE OAS MISSION THAT THE USG THOUGHT MONTESINOS SHOULD GO AND THE SECRETARY MADE THAT CLEAR IN HER MEETING WITH PUJIMORI SEPTEMBER 8.

6. (S) WHY DIDN'T FUJIMORI JUST FIRE MONTESINOS? WHY BRING DOWN HIS OWN PRESIDENCY, JUST TWO MONTHS AFTER BEING INAUGURATED?

SHORT ANSWER: MONTESINOS WAS TOO STRONG SIMPLY TO BE FIRED.

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WHEN FUJIMORI ASKED MONTESINOS ON SEPTEMBER 14 TO LEAVE,

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MONTESINOS AND THE MILITARY PUSHED BACK HARD ENOUGH THAT
FUJIMORI CONCLUDED HE COULD GET RID OF MONTESINOS ONLY BY A
BOLD, UNEXPECTED MOVE THAT MONTESINOS AND THE MILITARY WOULD
BE UNABLE TO OPPOSE. TUDELA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT
FUJIMORI INFORMED HIS CABINET OF HIS DECISION ONLY MINUTES
BEFORE HIS TAPED SPEECH WAS BROADCAST SEPTEMBER 16 AND THAT
--NICE TOUCH HERE -- FUJIMORI INVITED IN HIS MILITARY
COMMANDERS TO WATCH THE SPEECH WITH HIM.

7. (S) HOW SERIOUS WAS THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP?

FOR THREE DAYS FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S SEPTEMBER 16
DECISION, SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR
THAT THE MILITARY WAS ON BOARD, BACKING THE PRESIDENT AND
THAT THERE WAS NO PROBLEM WITH INSUBORDINATION. THAT TUNE
CHANGED ABRUPTLY ON WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 20, THE DAY AFTER
THE PRESS REPORTED FUJIMORI MET POST-MIDNIGHT WITH HIS
MILITARY COMMANDERS. VICE PRESIDENT TUDELA TOLD THE
AMBASSADOR THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD FEARED IMMINENT MILITARY
ACTION ON SUNDAY THE 17TH AND MONDAY THE 18TH. TENSION
ABATED AFTER THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY REACHED AN
AGREEMENT ON MONTESINOS' EXILE LATE SEPTEMBER 20, BUT PICKED
UP SHARPLY ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 AFTER THE GOP AND
MILITARY LEARNED THE POSSIBILITY OF MONTESINOS' EXILE IN
BRAZIL HAD FALLEN THROUGH. TUDELA SAID HE WAS TWICE SOUNDED
OUT ON HIS WILLINGNESS TO SERVE IF THE MILITARY FORCED
FUJIMORI OUT. TUDELA SAID HE TOLD THEM HE WAS NOT GOING TO
GOING TO BE PERU'S BORDABERRY

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STILL, WE HAVE SOME DOUBTS THAT A COUP WAS IN THE OFFING.
ASKED WHY THE MILITARY WOULD ACT WHEN MONTESINOS WAS SAFE IN
HEIR PROTECTION AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO FINDING
HIM AN EXILE ABROAD,

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BUT WE THINK THE MILITARY
COMMANDERS REALIZED THAT A COUP IN SUPPORT OF MONTESINOS
WOULD HAVE AROUSED INTENSE, QUITE POSSIBLY VIOLENT PUBLIC

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REACTION AND GREATLY COMPLICATED THEIR ABILITY TO COMMAND THE LOYALTY AND RESPECT OF THEIR OWN OFFICERS. THE MILITARY'S REAL LEVERAGE WAS LESS THE THREAT OF FORCING PUJIMORI OUT THAN THE ACUTE EMBARRASSMENT IT CAUSED FUJIMORI BY PROTECTING MONTESINOS (ONCE THAT POSITION BECAME CLEAR) AND REFRAINING FROM PUBLICLY SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION. STILL, IF THE PERUVIAN MILITARY WAS NOT GUILTY ACTUALLY OF COUP PLOTTING, NEITHER SHOULD IT BE GIVEN TOP MARKS FOR RESPECTING CIVILIAN RULE. IT FLIRTED WITH

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6540
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA IMMEDIATE
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DEFIANCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S AUTHORITY.

8. (S) IMPLICATIONS OF MONTESINOS' OUSTER

THIS OUTCOME WAS NOT PERFECT. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, MONTESINOS' ASYLUM IN PANAMA PERMITS HIM FOR THE TIME BEING TO AVOID TRIAL FOR CURRENT OR PAST ACTIONS THAT PROBABLY WARRANT ONE. THERE IS CERTAINLY THE APPEARANCE OF IMPUNITY STRENGTHENED. AS DISCUSSED ABOVE, CIVILIAN AUTHORITY DID NOT WIN A CLEAR CUT VICTORY, AS PUJIMORI WAS ABLE TO ASSERT HIS AUTHORITY OVER THE MILITARY ONLY BY OUT-THINKING THEM AND BY INFLECTING POLITICALLY MORTAL SELF-INJURY.

ON THE OTHER HAND, MONTESINOS' FALL FROM POWER IS DEFINITIVE AND HE MAY FACE CHARGES EITHER FROM A FUTURE PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT OR, GIVEN THE PINOCHET PRECEDENT, ELSEWHERE. HIS DEPARTURE FROM PERU VASTLY IMPROVES PROSPECTS FOR REAL DEMOCRATIC REFORM AND FOR FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS. ALREADY, THE NORMALLY SLAVISHLY PRO-GOVERNMENT BROADCAST MEDIA ARE MAKING AN EFFORT TO BE MORE BALANCED. WE MAY WELL SEE SUPPOSED MONTESINOS LOYALISTS IN THE JUDICIARY CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR, TOO, AS MONTESINOS' CONTROL OVER THE MEDIA AND JUDICIARY WERE BASED MORE ON LUCRE AND FEAR THAN GENUINE LOYALTY.

9. (S) LONG-TERM, AND WITH DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS REFORMED AND STRENGTHENED, PERU WILL BE A MUCH MORE STABLE PLACE. IT SHOULD ALSO BE GOOD FOR DEMOCRACY ELSEWHERE IN THE HEMISPHERE THAT THE PUJIMORE MODEL OF ILLIBERAL DEMOCRACY HAS FAILED. SHORT-TERM, PERU GOES BACK INTO SEVERAL MONTHS

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OF ELECTIONS PREPARATIONS AND GENUINE UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE OUTCOME. THE EFFECT ON ECONOMIC DECISION-MAKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WILL DAMPEN PROSPECTS FOR RENEWED GROWTH. PERU POSSIBLE LEADER ALEJANDRO TOLEDO IS, ON THE WHOLE, BETTER POSITIONED THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE,

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT TUDELA HAS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE IS ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED NOT/NOT TO BE A CANDIDATE. AN INTERESTING POSSIBILITY IS THAT HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN JORGE SANTISTEVAN COULD BECOME A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. SANTISTEVAN IS NOT ONLY A GENUINE PROPONENT OF THE RULE OF

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LAW AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, HE IS ALSO POLITICALLY ASTUTE. HE LACKS A POLITICAL BASE OF HIS OWN, HOWEVER, AND THUS CALLS TO MIND THE EXPERIENCE OF RAMIRO DE LEON IN GUATEMALA, 1993-1996.

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. IMAGE

10. (S) WE WILL COME IN FOR SOME CRITICISM HERE FROM CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION FOR OUR ROLE IN FACILITATING MONTESINOS' DEPARTURE,

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OTHERWISE, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS SEEN HERE AS HAVING ACQUITTED ITSELF WELL -- BY KEY MEDIA AND PROMINENT POLITICAL ANALYSTS. SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS -- FOREIGN MINISTER DE TRAZEGNIES, PRIME MINISTER SALAS, FIRST VICE

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PRESIDENT TUDELA -- HAVE BEEN EFFUSIVE IN THANKING THE AMBASSADOR FOR OUR SUPPORT. SO HAVE FIRST LADY KEIKO FUJIMORI AND ARCHBISHOP CIPRIANI (THE LATTER STAYED IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE AMBASSADOR THROUGHOUT AND PHONED SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 TO THANK US FOR OUR ROLE IN FACILITATING MONTESINOS' DEPARTURE). ON BALANCE, WE BELIEVE OUR CREDIBILITY HERE AS SERIOUSLY COMMITTED TO DEFENDING DEMOCRACY IS MUCH STRONGER.

HAMILTON

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